

Bridge over I-15 in Spanish Fork coming down Saturday

Genelle Pugmire - Daily Herald | Posted: Friday, June 18, 2010 12:49 am

It may not be as notable as the London bridge falling down, but the first of 63 bridges along the Interstate 15 Core project to be either rebuilt, redesigned or relocated is coming down this weekend, and that means a lot of noise and a full-freeway closure in the area.

Beginning Saturday at 9 p.m., the bridge spanning the freeway at 2700 North in Spanish Fork will be prepared for demolition.

"Full-freeway closure will begin at 10 p.m. and is scheduled to reopen Sunday at 11:30 a.m.," said Heather Barnum, spokeswoman for the Interstate 15 Core project.

The bridge rebuild will take 180 days to complete. The initial destruction will be loud, with powerful hydraulic jackhammers pounding away at the old structure built in the 1960s with the original freeway. According to Barnum, the jackhammers will work on the middle of the bridge at the strongest part. A protective coating of dirt is piled on the freeway below to cushion it from damage. The middle deck will then drop onto the freeway and the concrete will begin to be hauled away. The remaining parts of the bridge will then be demolished, and crews are going to break it up, pull out the rebar and place the concrete in an embankment. All of it will be used on the project as fill.

The contractors are expecting all of this to be completed in the allotted 15 hours. Detours will be in place for the duration of the bridge rebuild.

"Bridges are some of the first elements we need to work on, especially the bridges that go over the freeway because they are not wide enough to accommodate the lanes of traffic we are adding," Barnum said. "Bridge removals and replacements will be worked on over the next two years, with a lot of work right at first, beginning with the Spanish Fork 2700 North bridge this weekend."

Barnum said that UDOT and the contractors are taking every precaution to make sure the population, environment and topography are considered as much as possible. For instance, when it comes to the loud overnight jack hammering, a Public Involvement Coordinator has met with the businesses and residents in the area to let them know what will be happening, and when, and what kind of noise to expect.

"The bridges will be removed and replaced using various technologies depending on the area and where they are being replaced [in some cases, it is not in the same exact place as the old bridge].

In many instances, we will be building temporary bridges to keep the street open while we build the permanent one," Barnum said. "In many cases, like 2700 North, the street over the bridge [the east-west] will be closed for several months, some as much as a year."

While the bridge is coming down on Saturday, the freeway reconstruction has already begun. Barnum said that to keep as many lanes open as possible the road will be shifted to the left or the right depending on the area. With that road shift the traffic will be able to flow smoothly -- after the freeway reopens.